

# Airscoop

Edited by Colin E. Babb

## F-35B Goes Supersonic

On 10 June, the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter short takeoff/vertical landing variant flew faster than the speed of sound for the first time. U.S. Marine Corps pilot Lt. Col. Matt Kelly climbed to 30,000 feet and accelerated to Mach 1.07 (727 miles per hour) in the off-shore supersonic test track near NAS Patuxent River. It was the first in a series of planned supersonic test flights, and was the aircraft's 30<sup>th</sup> test flight overall.



*The F-35B went supersonic for the first time on 10 June.  
(Lockheed Martin)*

## Forrestal Is Towed to Meet Destiny

On 15 June, the decommissioned aircraft carrier ex-USS *Forrestal* (CVA/CV/AVT 59) departed Naval Station Newport for a three-day cruise to Philadelphia, where it awaits final disposal. The first of the "super carriers," the 60,000-ton *Forrestal* was commissioned on 29 September 1955, and was in service for more than 38 years. The ship was offered as a possible museum, but the Navy failed to receive any viable proposals and took the *Forrestal* off donation hold. The vessel will be sunk as a target or used to create an artificial reef.



*The decommissioned aircraft carrier ex-USS Forrestal departs Naval Station Newport for a three-day cruise to Philadelphia.  
(Photo by MCCA Melissa Weatherspoon)*

## Poseidon Arrives at Pax

The first test P-8A Poseidon multimission maritime aircraft arrived at NAS Patuxent River on 10 April. The aircraft, assigned to VX-20, arrived from Boeing's Seattle, Wash., facilities, where it began flight testing in October 2009. A second test aircraft arrived on 19 June.



*The new P-8A Poseidon receives an escort to NAS Patuxent River.  
(Boeing)*

## King Air Roll Out

On 18 May, Hawker Beechcraft Corp. rolled out the first special mission King Air 350 for the Marine Corps at the company's headquarters in Wichita, Kansas. Six modified King Air 350 turboprops (military designation UC-12W Huron) will replace the Marine Corps' six current UC-12 operational support airlift aircraft.

## Fire Scout Makes Catch on First Deployment

On 15 April, the MQ-8B Fire Scout returned to NAS Mayport from a six-month deployment aboard USS *McInerney* (FFG 8). While deployed with 4th Fleet, the unmanned aircraft assisted with counter-narcotics operations. *McInerney* launched one of its two embarked Fire Scouts to test different functions and settings when the aircraft acquired a suspected narcotics “go-fast” vessel. After three hours of surveillance, Navy and Coast Guard personnel seized approximately 60 kilos of cocaine.



*MQ-8B Fire Scout hovers over McInerney's flight deck.  
(Photo by MC2 Alan Gragg)*

## “Green Hornet” Makes Historic Flight

The Navy celebrated Earth Day on 22 April with a supersonic test flight of the “Green Hornet,” an F/A-18F Super Hornet powered by a 50/50 blend of conventional jet fuel and biofuel. The aircraft took off and flew at greater than the speed of sound above NAS Patuxent River. The biofuel is made with camelina, a oil-producing plant native to Eurasia that can be grown on marginal lands and does not compete with food crops.



*The “Green Hornet” received a 50/50 blend of biofuel  
and conventional fuel. (Photo by Liz Goettee)*



*The “Green Hornet” conducts its supersonic test flight over NAS Patuxent River. (Photo by Liz Goettee)*

## First Student Trains with T-6B

The first student naval aviator to train in the T-6B Texan II took flight at NAS Whiting Field on 18 May. Ensign Christopher D. Farkas, assigned to VT-3 and TW-5, teamed with Marine Corps instructor pilot Capt. Michael Perkins to complete the inaugural flight. The T-6B Texan II is replacing its long time predecessor the T-34C Turbomenter. TW-5 anticipates a complete transition at NAS Whiting Field by 2015.

## Women Aviators Take Command

On 29 July, Rear Adm. Nora Tyson assumed command of Carrier Strike Group 2 aboard USS *George H. W. Bush* (CVN 77). She is the first woman to command a carrier strike group. On 3 June, *Navy Times* reported that Capt. Sara Joyner was selected to be the Navy's first woman carrier air group commander. CNO Adm. Gary Roughead announced the selection at the 23rd annual Women's Leadership Symposium in Washington, D.C. Joyner is slated to command CVW-14, which is currently assigned to USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76), and is likely to join the unit first as deputy CAG in September 2011 and then assume command 12 to 18 months later, according to Navy spokesman Lt. Nate Christensen.



Rear Adm. Nora Tyson is the first woman to command a carrier strike group. (Photo MC1 Tiffini Jones Vanderwyst)

## Mishaps

On 26 October 2009, an AH-1 Cobra assigned to HMLA-367 and a UH-1 Huey assigned to HMLA-169, both with MAG-39 and I MEF, collided while on missions over the southern province of Helmand in Afghanistan. Four Marines were killed, and two were wounded.

On 28 October 2009, a T-34C Turbomenter assigned to VT-28 of TW-4 based out of NAS Corpus Christi, Texas, went down approximately 1.5 miles off the coast of Matagorda Island. The Coast Guard recovered the bodies of both pilots.

On 29 October 2009, a Marine Corps AH-1W Super Cobra with MAG-39 based at Camp Pendleton, Calif., collided with a Coast Guard C-130 Hercules off the coast of San Clemente Island. All nine crew members of the two aircraft perished.

On 23 January, a T-34 Turbomaster went down in Lake Pontchartrain while on approach to Lakefront Airport in New Orleans. The aircraft was assigned to VT-6 with TW-5 at NAS Whiting Field. The student pilot survived and was





*Fire trucks spray a bridge of water over two T-6B training aircraft to celebrate their arrival. The aircraft will be used to replace the venerable T-34C Turbo Mentor plane in flight training for student pilots. (Photo by Jay Cope)*

treated for moderate injuries. The body of the instructor pilot was recovered on 27 January.

On 18 February, an MH-60S Nighthawk assigned to HSC-26 based at NAS Norfolk crashed on the side of a mountain in West Virginia in more than four feet of snow. The helicopter was participating in Operation Southern Trooper, an annual training exercise. All 17 crewmembers and passengers were rescued successfully.

On 10 March, a Marine Corps F/A-18D Hornet assigned to VMFA-222 developed a dual-engine fire and crashed in the Atlantic approximately 30 miles east of St. Helena Island. Both pilots ejected safely and were rescued by the Coast Guard.

On 15 March, two single-seat F/A-18E Super Hornet aircraft were involved in a mid-air collision while on a routine training mission flying in the Fallon Range Training Complex in Nevada. Neither pilot was injured. Both aircraft are assigned to VFA-137 based at NAS Lemoore, Calif.

On 31 March, an E-2C Hawkeye from VAW-121 on USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69) crashed in the North Arabian Sea when returning from a mission over Afghanistan. After losing oil pressure in the starboard engine, the pilot managed to keep the aircraft aloft long enough for his three crewmen to bail out. The pilot was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

On 12 April, a T-39N Sabreliner crashed near Ellijay, Ga. Rescue crews recovered all four bodies from the crash. The aircraft was assigned to VT-86 of TW-6 based out of NAS Pensacola, and was conducting a routine cross-country training mission.

On 10 June, A Navy T-45C Goshawk training jet assigned to TW-2 ran off the end of the runway at NAS Kingsville. The pilot ejected safely and was taken to a local hospital for treatment of minor injuries.